



Speech By  
**Stephen Andrew**


**MEMBER FOR MIRANI**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2021

**MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Rural and Regional Queensland, Road Infrastructure**

 **Mr ANDREW** (Mirani—PHON) (2.37 pm): Since January this year, more than 83 people have died on Queensland roads—thankfully, in the Mackay district there have been eight fewer deaths this year than in the same period last year; there were 25 more in the same period last year—with 29 of the victims aged between 16 and 24. In my electorate there has been a spate of horror crashes. Thirty of the state's 83 fatalities have occurred on Central Queensland roads alone.

I have become tired of hearing public officials and the media lay the blame for Queensland's appalling road crash statistics on driver behaviour. Driver behaviour is a factor but it is not the only one. The reality is that safer roads save lives. Recently at a federal Senate inquiry, Engineers Australia revealed that national and state road funding is being allocated to road congestion relief, not road safety improvements—even though road crashes cost the Australian economy almost twice as much as road congestion. That is without even factoring in all of the trauma and mental health costs associated with road crashes and fatalities. According to one expert, most of the road funding is being spent on urban road capacity improvements and does not address the quality or condition of rural roads, where most of fatal crashes occur. We talk about equality and so on for our First Nations people, but most of the roads to rural Aboriginal communities are dirt roads that are very poorly maintained. The group also highlighted the fact that Australian roads represent the only infrastructure for which there is no independent economic oversight or independent safety regulator overseeing projects.

In my electorate I have made numerous requests for independent road safety audits on my roads through the region, all of which have been ignored or seem to have been dismissed. There are countless safety issues causing community anger and frustration, some of which have been caused by design flaws in road upgrades carried out with little regard for safety issues.

Just recently there was a semitrailer rollover in Sarina where two pieces of road bitumen of different ages join and there is a divot. The B-double truck rolled into the drain and the alignment of the bumper bar to the existing scrape from the crash before could not have been lined up better with a micrometer in that it was exactly the same. Just recently there was also a rollover in the middle of Walkerston involving an extended traffic island. The first rollover in that area was with a B-double truck. It rolled on to the footpath of the Walkerston State School. Thankfully it was at four in the afternoon and there were no students or parents on that corner at the time. The second time it was at midday when all of the schoolkids were contained within the schoolyard. We were very lucky again, but it is still happening.

We all must take into consideration—and I have shared some photographs with Minister Bailey about this—that when these things continue to happen in the same area it is only a matter of time before there is a fatality. Given what is currently happening on our roads, it is going to happen. There was another accident on the same stretch of road where these two trucks near the Sarina wreckers had rolled over. A lady tried to exit that road not even 300 metres away and she was shunted into an

oncoming car. The oncoming car smashed her engine block out of her vehicle with so much force that it flew up the road and destroyed the axle on the bogie of the B-double that hit her in the back end. That is scary stuff, so we have to look at doing something about the roads. I have tried to talk about Anzac Avenue. Trucks are going through there making a heck of a racket and destroying the bitumen.

Throughout the electorate we have also seen double-lane highways where the design has failed to account for old bridges and two vehicles cannot fit on the bridge. It is only wide enough for one vehicle and maybe three-quarters of another. I have inspected the new Mackay bypass ring-road and it is not possible to fit a tractor and a car or a tractor and a truck and it is a 100-kilometre zone, but motorists are expected to do it. There are unintended consequences that are happening right now where someone is going to get hurt or, even worse, killed. These are the things going on. Trucks on the Mount Morgan range with a load on have to veer into oncoming traffic on the way down and other motorists have to back up to let the truck through. That is destroying all of the barricades on the range itself, so local traffic does not even have the safety of the barricades after trucks are entering. We need to look at rural roads in our electorates. I have spoken to the minister. It is a huge concern that needs to be addressed.